

43. Repairs to forest guards' huts, and the building of new huts also, for housing forest guards in their beats in five divisions of the Central Circle, account for a sum of Rs. 1,256-0-0, distributed thus :—

No.	Division.	Amount.
		Rs.
1	East Khándesh	657
2	West Khándesh	418
3	Násik	159
4	Ahmednagar	15
5	Poona	7
6	Sátára ... ..	...
7	Sholápur ... ..	...
	Total ...	1,256

(b).—PROTECTION OF FORESTS FROM INJURY.

(1).—General Protection and Breaches of Forest Law.

44. The year opened with 180 prosecutions in progress before Magistrates and 15 cases undergoing disposal by forest officers under Section 67 of the Forest Act. During the year 13,199 cases of breaches of Forest law were discovered, but in 2,312 of these cases the offender was not traced; 2,189 cases were treated under Section 67 of the Forest Act by forest officers; 1,610 cases were sent up for trial by Magistrates; and 7,088 cases were let off by forest officers, who warned the accused persons and relieved them of further proceedings under the forest law. The number of old and new cases under hearing amounted to 1,790 against 1,799 of the past year: of these 1,177 cases involving 3,101 persons were disposed of by conviction and punishment of the accused persons, while 321 cases involving 995 persons were dismissed, and 292 cases were left pending at the end of the last day of the forest-year, *viz.*, 30th June 1897. Of the 2,204 cases, including 15 of the preceding year treated under Section 67 of the Indian Forest Act by the Divisional Forest Officers, 2,091 implicating 4,851 persons were settled, and 113 remained unfinished when the year closed. A comparison of the prosecutions completed during 1895-96 and during the year of the report, with their results and relative percentages of failures, is given in the following statement :—

No.	Division.	1895-96.		1896-97.		Percentage of Failures.	
		Prosecu- tions.	Acquit- tals.	Prosecu- tions.	Acquit- tals.	1895-96.	1896-97.
1	East Khándesh	155	19	69	15	12·2	21·7
2	West Khándesh	76	8	112	13	10·5	11·6
3	Násik	157	19	107	9	12·1	8·4
4	Ahmednagar	405	74	422	107	18·2	25·3
5	Poona	458	110	487	104	24·0	21·3
6	Sátára	421	67	251	62	15·9	24·7
7	Sholápur	127	36	50	11	23·3	22·0
	Total ...	1,799	333	1,498	321	18·5	21·4

46. This table shows that during the year there were 301 or by 16·7 per cent. fewer prosecutions than during the previous year. Sholápur, East Khándesh, Sátára and Násik exhibit a decrease of 60·6, 55·4, 40·3 and 31·8 per cent. respectively, but on the other hand the percentage of failures in East Khándesh and Sátára is 9·5 and 8·8 greater than that of the previous year; Násik records a considerable improvement, the difference in percentage of failures being only 3·7; and Sholápur also has a better show than last year, the percentage of its failures being 6·3 less than of the previous year. In the West Khándesh and Poona Divisions

prosecutions were 60·5 and 6·3 per cent. greater, and acquittals were respectively 1·1 greater and 2·7 per cent. less. Ahmednagar shows an increase both in the number of prosecutions and in the percentage of failures, the results being 4·1 and 7·1 respectively.

47. As required by Government Resolution No. 5148, dated 9th July 1897, a classification of the cases taken into Court, those dealt by Forest officers under Section 67 of the Forest Act, and those that were not detected, during the year, is given in the subjoined table :—

Division.	CASES TAKEN INTO COURT.				CASES COMPOUNDED.				CASES UNDETECTED.				TOTAL CASES.				Grand Total of cases.
	Injury to Forests by fire.	Unauthorized felling or appropriation of wood and other minor Forest produce.	Grazing without permission or in tracts in which grazing is prohibited.	Other offences.	Injury to Forests by fire.	Unauthorized felling or appropriation of wood and other minor Forest produce.	Grazing without permission or in tracts in which grazing is prohibited.	Other offences.	Injury to Forests by fire.	Unauthorized felling or appropriation of wood and other minor Forest produce.	Grazing without permission or in tracts in which grazing is prohibited.	Other offences.	Injury to Forests by fire.	Unauthorized felling or appropriation of wood and other minor Forest produce.	Grazing without permission or in tracts in which grazing is prohibited.	Other offences.	
East Khândesh ...	9	16	37	14	3	169	...	129	17	22	...	12	39	197	37	155	418
West Khândesh ...	25	59	3	40	...	211	37	132	53	31	1	5	78	301	41	177	597
Násik ...	8	111	12	7	6	210	8	3	49	67	3	1	63	378	23	11	474
Ahmednagar ...	3	55	300	71	...	38	39	7	5	138	59	11	8	231	398	89	726
Poona ...	8	216	217	107	...	201	164	20	48	342	1,184	12	56	759	1,565	139	2,519
Sátára ...	8	47	150	43	1	196	471	...	37	180	19	7	46	423	640	50	1,169
Sholápur ...	...	4	32	8	...	2	55	...	...	18	1	...	...	24	88	8	120
Total ...	61	508	751	290	9	1,017	774	291	209	788	1,267	48	279	2,313	2,792	629	6,013

48. It will be perceived that though the number of cases relating to injury to forests from fire have gone down by 574, forest crime under other classes exhibits a considerable increase, and this may be attributed to two reasons, viz. : (1) a pinch for food caused by famine that prevailed during the year, which drove people to resort to illicit practices : (2) to better attempts on the part of forest subordinates to detect crime.

49. Undetected offences under the class "Grazing without Permission" or "Grazing in tracts in which it is prohibited" show a considerable rise, because owing to the extreme scarcity of fodder owners of cattle let their animals roam about the country untended in search of food, and the animals naturally trespassed when they were attracted by the presence of vegetation.

50. The system of reporting offences to and their treatment by forest officers prescribed in Government Resolutions Nos. 4516 and 6102, dated respectively the 15th June and 10th August 1895, has been in force and has worked fairly well.

51. The classification of the sums of money offered to and accepted by Divisional Forest Officers under Section 67 by way of compensation for the forest offence from the accused person, in amounts of rupee 1 and upwards to the maximum of Rs. 50, required by Government Resolution No. 1899, dated 13th March 1891, is as under :—

No.	Division.	Number of cases in which compensation was fixed at Rupees																								
		Rs. 1	Rs. 2	" 3	" 4	" 5	" 6	" 7	" 8	" 9	" 10	" 11	" 12	" 13	" 14	" 15	" 16	" 17	" 18	" 19	" 20	" 21	" 22	" 23	" 24	" 25
1	East Khândesh...	149	44	24	21	15	6	7	...	2	3	1	1	4	1	...	1	...	1	5	...	...	1	1	...	...
2	West Khândesh...	262	68	22	7	15	...	1	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
3	Násik ...	129	39	21	14	5	5	3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
4	Ahmednagar ...	19	13	13	4	7	3	3	...	2	3	...	1	...	...	2	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
5	Poona ...	79	77	36	32	36	26	15	21	6	16	2	2	8	1	11	3	2	...	3	3	1	...	2	...	...
6	Sátára ...	139	127	86	72	72	38	22	20	15	16	8	11	4	8	6	2	2	...	1	6	3	2	...	...	...
7	Sholápur ...	8	15	7	11	2	2	2	2	2	4	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Total ...	785	383	209	161	153	80	53	46	28	47	11	18	17	11	21	7	7	3	2	17	4	2	3	1	4

55. Compensation to the extent of Rs. 7,647 was accepted in 2,091 cases disposed of under Section 67 against Rs. 6,602 in 2,056 of the previous year. The distribution of the figures among the several Divisions is as under :—

No.	Division.	1895-96.		1896-97.	
		Number of cases.	Compensation.	Number of cases.	Compensation.
			Rs.		Rs.
1	East Khándesh	217	536	291	916
2	West Khándesh	261	604	380	519
3	Násik	263	632	226	356
4	Amednagar	54	234	84	483
5	Poona	542	2,982	385	2,002
6	Sátára	103	467	668	3,173
7	Sholápur	616	1,147	57	198
	Total	2,056	6,602	2,091	7,647

56. There has been an increase both in the number of cases and in the amount of compensation of the East Khándesh Division in consequence of detected offences under the rules of Section 41 of the Forest Act having been compounded instead of sent before the Magistrates. The Divisional Forest Officers, West Khándesh and Ahmednagar, have not explained the reasons for the increases of compounded cases in their charges. The small decline in Násik is owing to the Divisional Forest Officer having let off with a warning some cases sent up to him for disposal under Section 67, and the incidence of the compensation received in this Division shows that a comparatively light assessment was imposed by the Divisional Forest Officer in the cases settled by him. Illicit grazing offences in Poona have diminished 50 per cent. in consequence of the opening of large areas of closed forests to grazing and in the dearth of grass under the effects of drought. A considerable increase, both in the number of offences and in the amount of compensation, has taken place in the Sátára District, because the Divisional Forest Officer, Sátára, preferred the system of dealing with the more common and less serious classes of forest offences under Section 67 to that of prosecuting them, for the reasons that it saves much of the time of the Protective Establishment from being spent in the Magistrate's Courts, and allows their more constant presence within their beats in the forest areas; it saves the self-respect of an offender who may not be a hardened or a willing criminal, and the witnesses for the defence and prosecution escape the trouble and vexation of undertaking journeys to and from the Magistrate's Courts, with the delays that inevitably occur before a case is tried and judgment given.

57. The orders contained in Government Resolution No. 4516, dated 15th June 1895, which direct that no order should be given to proceed under Section 67 in any case in which the Divisional Forest Officer would not be prepared to order magisterial proceedings to be taken as an alternative, have caused the great fall noticeable both in the number of cases compounded; and there is a proportional rise in the "warned" cases; as formerly compensation could be accepted, as is provided in Section 67, from any person against whom a reasonable suspicion exists that he has committed a forest offence, although there might not be such a complete chain of evidence as would lead to a conviction were the accused person to be prosecuted in a Magistrate's Court.

58. A number of detected trivial offences, which were not the outcome of deliberate intention, but were committed through ignorance of law, or were the acts of children or of minors, and several offences, each of which was the first offence registered against the accused person, were let off by the Divisional Forest Officers with a warning administered to the offenders. The statement below gives the classification of and comparison between the "warned cases" of 1895-96 and those of the year of this report :—

No.	Division.	1895-96.					1896-97.				
		CLASSIFICATION.					CLASSIFICATION.				
		Total.	Fires.	Timber.	Grazing.	Other offences.	Total.	Fire.	Timber.	Grazing.	Other offences.
1	East Khándesh ...	589	4	41	455	89	291	27	89	132	43
2	West Khándesh ...	122	...	6	70	46	291	...	7	265	19
3	Násik ...	725	33	28	650	14	861	5	180	643	33
4	Ahmednagar ...	2,664	1	32	2,630	1	2,420	...	39	2,381	...
5	Poona ...	2,330	10	131	2,188	1	844	...	83	743	18
6	Sátára ...	2,049	23	108	1,791	127	1,463	12	183	1,191	74
7	Sholápur ...	1,382	...	...	1,382	...	918	...	53	863	2
	Total ...	9,861	71	346	9,166	278	7,088	44	634	6,221	189

59. Offences under "Timber" have nearly doubled, while those under "other classes" and especially under "grazing" show a considerable falling off, owing to the fact that extensive portions of the closed forests were thrown open to free grazing in consequence of the prevailing scarcity of fodder supply.

60. An account of the total number of Police cases of the two years is given in the table below :—

No.	Division.	Prosecuted.		Compounded.		Warned.		Undetected.		Total.	
		1895-96.	1896-97.	1895-96.	1896-97.	1895-96.	1896-97.	1895-96.	1896-97.	1895-96.	1896-97.
1	East Khándesh ...	155	69	217	291	589	291	98	51	1,059	702
2	West Khándesh ...	76	112	261	380	122	291	147	90	606	873
3	Násik ...	157	107	263	226	725	861	179	110	1,324	1,304
4	Ahmednagar ...	405	422	54	84	2,664	2,420	107	213	3,230	3,139
5	Poona ...	458	487	542	385	2,330	844	613	1,586	3,943	3,303
6	Sátára ...	421	251	103	668	2,049	1,463	280	243	2,853	2,625
7	Sholápur ...	127	50	616	57	1,382	918	12	19	2,137	1,044
	Total ...	1,799	1,498	2,056	2,091	9,861	7,088	1,430	2,312	15,152	12,989

61. For the reasons explained in the foregoing paragraph the total number of police cases during the year has diminished by 2,163, and proportionate decrease is visible in the number of "prosecutions" and in the number of "warned cases". The percentage of prosecutions in respect of the detected cases is 14·03 against 11·8 of the preceding year.

62. These results show that forest crime is not so common or generally prevalent in the Central Circle as might be expected seeing that the table above represents an account of 12 months, and that it concerns 4,065,496 acres of reserved forests.

(2).—*Protection from Fire.*

63. The statement subjoined gives a comparison between the results of fire conservancy of the two years :—

No.	Division.	Forest area placed under protection against fire in acres.		Failures.		Percentage burnt.		Expenditure, incurred in Rupees.	
		1895-96.	1896-97.	1895-96.	1896-97.	1895-96.	1896-97.	1895-96.	1896-97.
1	East Khándesh ...	512,104	521,887	45,999	62,495	8·5	11·9	144	57
2	West Khándesh ...	1,111,451	1,115,999	211,721	110,780	12·5	9·9	568	1,704
3	Násik ...	818,805	818,823	18,279	4,383	2·2	0·5	198	532
4	Ahmednagar ...	512,997	542,847	3,172	28	0·5	0·005	17	—2
5	Poona ...	455,444	456,096	21,166	771	4·6	0·16	6	367
6	Sátára ...	446,691	446,920	1,653	557	0·3	0·12	40	82
7	Sholápur ...	177,752	177,863	853	4	0·4	0·002	1	...
8	Famine, Grass and Grazing.	.....	.....	.....	.....	...	...	...	1,425
	Total ...	4,072,244	4,080,435	302,843	179,018	7·4	4·3	974	4,165